

My name is Margaret A. (Peggy) Duezabou [D U E Z A B O U]. I too am saddened to read about conditions found during large-scale dog impoundments. While I applaud those who seek to remedy these situations, I sincerely believe HB548 will fail to significantly reduce the incidence of these events. For that reason, I stand in opposition of HB548.

First, I bring a few simple facts to your attention to draw a clear distinction between large and small-scale dog breeding. My nine dogs, seven of which are intact, are lawfully licensed as a kennel in Lewis & Clark County. In the past 15 years, I have whelped four litters. My 10-year-old stud dog has sired two litters in his entire lifetime. I believe many people who consider themselves Hobby Breeders will share similar, personal stories with you today.

There has been a lot of discussion among dog breeders as to who will be regulated by HB548. Some say all dog breeders must register. Others believe the arbitrary number 20 brings state scrutiny. But, this discussion clouds the real issue: HB548 is contradictory and vague in addition to being off target. If commercial kennels with hundreds of neglected dogs are deemed facilities in need of regulation, then it is unproductive to regulate many small, inconspicuous kennels where owners' only crimes are to raise occasional litters and to keep intact animals. Better to charge offenders of Montana's current animal cruelty laws than to make new laws that catch citizens in the act of being responsible.

During the 1990s, some local governments around the US enacted breeder-licensing schemes in combination with Mandatory Spay Neuter (MSN) Laws. Not surprisingly, licensing decreased along with revenue for enforcement. At the same time, budgets increased to accommodate officers, vehicles, and equipment connected to regulation (www.animallawcoalition.com). It is not unreasonable to imagine Montana, faced with new layers of oversight mandated by HB548, following similar patterns.

Finally, a simple phone call to the Fort Collins Office of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service brought me a print copy of the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and an enlightening conversation with their staff. I believe using current laws and regulatory systems is a first step to monitoring dog breeding. Montanans should increase their commitment to prosecuting cases of animal cruelty and to cooperating with federal agency to deter objectionable and substandard Commercial Kennels. Therefore, I ask this committee to reject HB548.

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